

BE A SMART SHOPPER ABOUT FALSE ADVERTISING

TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
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Extension Family Resource Management Specialists
Texas A&M University

Have you ever gone to a store because of an ad, only to find disappointment waiting inside? The item wasn't all it was cut out to be in the ad? The supply had vanished and the salesman tried to interest you in another product?

Both reputable and dishonest merchants offer what seem to be good buys at attractive prices. A swindler's deal is one that sounds too good to be true. Buying from reputable merchants helps you avoid the schemer's trap.

Advertising Talk

Knowing words that merchants use to explain price reductions can help you decide whether or not the price is really good.

Regularly . . . usually . . . formerly . . . was \$30.00, now \$10. Merchants may compare sale prices with the store's former selling price for the identical product. Know what you would pay for the same or a similar item if it were not on sale in another store. One store's sale price may be the same as another store's regular price. The former price may be stated higher than it really was.

Suggested retail price . . . list price . . . nationally advertised at. Honest dealers may compare the advertised price with the regular price used at other principal retail outlets in the area. Remember that the price is a comparison with other local stores and not necessarily with the advertiser's own regular selling price. Your own comparison of this merchant's price with others is the only way to know exactly how much you would or would not save.

Comparable value . . . compare at. Products may be compared with similar but not identical items sold at other stores in the same area. The terms are not always clear in meaning. Before buying, check the real price and quality of a comparable item.

Factory price . . . wholesale price. Beware of the business that advertises prices which merchants pay either the manufacturer or the distributor. Keep in mind that a merchant loses money by selling goods at the price he paid for them.

Buy three — get one free . . . two for the price of one. The honest dealer offers a legitimate deal, but the schemer often raises the regular price of an item, eliminating or reducing savings on a free item.

Reduced to \$9.99. Complete responsibility falls on you for guessing the regular price when nothing indicates the previous selling price. An item could be reduced from \$10.00 to \$9.99!

Never undersold . . . lowest price ever . . . lowest prices in town. Beware of a business which makes a regular habit of attracting you with lowest price claims. To legitimately make such claims, the seller has to know the prices at all other stores in the area and he must offer the lowest price!

Remember that Texas law forbids a store to advertise false or misleading statements about price reductions.

Bait Advertising

Dishonest merchants frequently offer tempting deals to attract you into their stores. Once you've taken the bait and are inside, the schemer may try to interest you in a higher-priced item by telling you the advertised item is sold out, unsuitable or no good.

It is legal for a merchant to call your attention to a more expensive item as long as you have the choice of buying the advertised bargain. It is illegal, however, for a Texas store to advertise an item if it is not intended to be sold.

Texas law also requires stores which advertise an item on sale to have a supply large enough to meet reasonable public demand unless the ad specifies a limited quantity.

What can you do if you arrive early at a sale and the item is sold out? Or if a shipment of sale items didn't arrive on time? Ask for a rain check, regardless of the item — food, appliances or tires. A reputable dealer wants to maintain good will. He may give you the special price even when his reasonable supply sold out fast.

What To Do

Avoid the trap of false advertising. Shop around before you buy and stick to honest dealers. Have verbal promises made by a sales person put in writing. Be courteous to the sales person; however, do not be afraid to say NO if you do not want what they are trying to sell or you are not sure you are getting a fair deal.

Help protect Texas from false advertising. Save a copy of misleading ads and report deliberate attempts to mislead or trap you to the Better Business Bureau and to:

Attorney General's Office
Consumer Protection Division
P. O. Box 12548
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

or

Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner
P. O. Box 2107
Austin, Texas 78767

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10M—3-76, Revision HM